CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1   1.   An image forming device consumable monitoring method
2   comprising:
3   storing information regarding a plurality of consumables usable by an
4   image forming device to form hard images, wherein the stored information for an
5   individual one of the consumables includes a stored consumable identifier which
6   identifies the respective consumable and a stored party identifier utilized to identify
7   a proper party of the respective consumable;
8   receiving information regarding a consumable to be verified including a
9   received consumable identifier which identifies the consumable to be verified and
10   a received party identifier utilized to identify the proper party associated with the
11   consumable to be verified;
12   comparing the received consumable identifier with at least one of the
13   stored consumable identifiers; and
14   comparing the received party identifier with at least one of the stored
15   party identifiers.

1   2.   The method of claim 1 further comprising forwarding a message
2   to the proper party of the respective consumable responsive to the comparings.

1   3.   The method of claim 1 further comprising forwarding a command
2   to an image forming device coupled with the consumable to be verified to disable
3   at least one operation of the image forming device coupled with the consumable
4   to be verified responsive to the comparings.

1   4.   The method of claim 1 further comprising forwarding a warning
2   message to an image forming device coupled with the consumable to be verified
3   responsive to the comparings.

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1   5.   The method of claim 1 further comprising recording the received

2 consumable identifier, the received party identifier, and date and time information

3 regarding the reception of the received information.

1   6.   The method of claim 1 wherein the receiving the received party

2 identifier comprises receiving a received device identifier which identifies the image

3 forming device which communicated the information and wherein the storing

4 comprises storing the stored party identifier comprising at least one stored device

5 identifier which identifies an image forming device associated with the proper party

6 for the respective consumable and wherein the comparing the received party

7 identifier comprises comparing the received device identifier with the stored device

8 identifier.

1   7.   The method of claim 6 wherein the storing the stored party

2 identifier comprises storing a plurality of stored device identifiers and the comparing

3 the received party identifier comprises comparing the received device identifier with

4 the plurality of stored device identifiers.

1   8.   The method of claim 1 wherein the receiving the received party

2 identifier comprises receiving the received party identifier which directly identifies

3 the proper party of the respective consumable.

1   9.   A consumable monitoring system comprising:

2   a database configured to store information regarding a plurality of

3   consumables usable by an image forming device to form hard images, wherein the

4   stored information for an individual one of the consumables includes a stored

5   consumable identifier which identifies the respective consumable, and a stored

6   party identifier utilized to identify a proper party associated with the respective

7   consumable;

8   an interface adapted to receive information regarding a consumable to be

9   verified including a received consumable identifier which identifies the consumable

10 to be verified and a received party identifier utilized to identify the proper party

11 associated with the consumable to be verified; and

12 processing circuitry configured to compare the received consumable

13 identifier with the stored consumable identifier and to compare the received party

14 identifier with the stored party identifier.

1   10.   The system of claim 9 wherein the processing circuitry is

2   configured to forward a message to the proper party associated with the respective

3   consumable responsive to the comparisons.

1   11.   The system of claim 9 wherein the processing circuitry is

2   configured to forward a command to disable at least one operation of an image

3   forming device coupled with the consumable to be verified responsive to the

4   comparison.

1   12.   The system of claim 9 wherein the processing circuitry is

2   configured to forward a warning message to an image forming device coupled with

3   the consumable to be verified responsive to the comparison.

1   13.   The system of claim 9 further comprising a memory device, and

2   wherein the processing circuitry is configured to forward the received consumable

3   identifier, the received party identifier, and date and time information regarding the

4   reception of the received consumable identifier and the received party identifier to

5   the memory device for storage.

1   14.   The system of claim 9 wherein the interface is adapted to receive

2   the information regarding the consumable to be verified including the received party

3   identifier comprising a received device identifier which identifies the image forming

4   device which communicated the information and wherein the database is

5   configured to store the stored party identifier comprising at least one stored device

6   identifier which identifies an image forming device associated with the proper party

7   for the respective consumable and wherein the processing circuitry is configured

8   to compare the received device identifier with the stored device identifier to

9   compare the received party identifier with the stored party identifier.

1   15.   The system of claim 14 wherein the database is configured to

2   store the stored party identifier comprising a plurality of stored device identifiers

3   which identify a plurality of image forming devices associated with the proper party

4   of the respective consumable, and wherein the processing circuitry is configured

5   to compare the received device identifier with the stored device identifiers.

1   16.   The system of claim 9 wherein the interface is adapted to receive

2   the information regarding the consumable to be verified including the received party

3   identifier which directly identifies the proper party of the respective consumable.

1   17.   An image forming device comprising:

2   an image engine configured to use a consumable to form a hard image;

3   processing circuitry coupled with the image engine and configured to

4   formulate an identifier message including a party identifier utilized to identify a

5   party associated with image forming device and an identifier of the consumable,

6   and wherein the processing circuitry is further configured to control communication

7   of the identifier message; and

8   an interface adapted to communicate externally of the image forming

9   device and to communicate the identifier message.

1   18.   The device of claim 17 wherein the interface is adapted to receive

2   a command responsive to the communication of the identifier message, and the

3   processing circuitry is configured to disable at least one operation of the image

4   forming device with respect to formation of hard images responsive to receiving the

5   command.

1   19.   The device of claim 17 wherein the interface is adapted to receive

2   a warning message responsive to the communication of the identifier message, and

3   the processing circuitry is configured to control communication of the warning

4   message using the image forming device responsive to receiving the warning

5   message.

1   20.   The device of claim 17 wherein the processing circuitry is

2   configured to formulate the identifier message including the party identifier which

3   identifies the image forming device.

1   21.   The device of claim 17 wherein the processing circuitry is

2   configured to formulate the identifier message including the party identifier which

3   directly identifies the party associated with the image forming device.

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1   22.   The device of claim 17 wherein the processing circuitry is
2 configured to detect coupling of the consumable with the image forming device and
3 to control the communication of the identifier message responsive to the detection
4 of the coupling.

1   23.   The device of claim 17 wherein the image engine comprises a print
2 engine.